



## **Become a Champion for Ending Violence against Women and Girls**

**Join the call for a new Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) dedicated to ending violence against women and girls**

Your Excellency,

Thirty years ago, the UN Commission on the Status of Women recognized that violence against women and girls was a grave and widespread human rights violation and in 1991 recommended that a comprehensive instrument be adopted to address the problem. Since then, the call for a global framework to end violence against women and girls has grown stronger and more urgent as rates of violence against women and girls rise.

In 2022, UN data revealed that femicide was at its highest level in twenty years.<sup>1</sup> 2023 data showed that globally, a woman or girl is killed every 10 minutes by someone in their own family.<sup>2</sup> Twenty-four percent of adolescent girls — nearly 19 million young women — are physically or sexually abused by a partner before the age of 20.<sup>3</sup> Digital violence and technology-facilitated violence are among the most rapidly evolving and pervasive forms of violence against women and girls. The UN estimates that as much as 58 percent of women experience some form of online or technology-driven violence.<sup>4</sup> A 2024 report by the UN Secretary-General noted that the prevalence of online child sexual exploitation and abuse is over 300 million children under age 18 in the previous 12 months.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and UN Women, *Gender-Related Killings of Women and Girls (Femicide/Feminicide): Global Estimates of Female Intimate Partner/Family-Related Homicides in 2022*, (2023), <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2023-11/gender-related-killings-of-women-and-girls-femicide-feminicide-global-estimates-2022-en.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> World Health Organization, “Adolescent girls face alarming rates of intimate partner violence,” Press Release, (29 July 2024), <https://www.who.int/news/item/29-07-2024-adolescent-girls-face-alarming-rates-of-intimate-partner-violence>.

<sup>4</sup> UN Women, “FAQs: Trolling, stalking, doxing, and other forms of violence against women in the digital age,” Press Release (28 June 2024), <https://www.unwomen.org/en/articles/faqs/faqs-trolling-stalking-doxing-and-other-forms-of-violence-against-women-in-the-digital-age>

<sup>5</sup> *Report of the Secretary-General, Intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls: technology-facilitated violence against women and girls*, UN General Assembly, UN Doc A/79/500 (8 Oct 2024), para 14, <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2024-10/a-79-500-sg-report-ending-violence-against-women-and-girls-2024-en.pdf>.

While efforts have been made to address the problem through soft law instruments — most notably the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women and CEDAW General Recommendation 35 — the lack of a binding, hard law framework allows high rates of violence against women and girls to persist.<sup>6</sup>

**What is needed is a single, comprehensive treaty that addresses all forms of violence, in all spheres, under all circumstances, for all women and girls, unifying global norms and standards into a text that is binding. A new Optional Protocol to the CEDAW convention (OP-CEDAW) to end violence against women and girls would provide such a hard law framework and lead to stronger adherence to global standards.**

Today, more than 4,000 women's rights organizations and activists, 16 nations, and four Special Rapporteurs on violence against women and girls (the current and three former) are leading the call for the creation of this instrument. **I believe ADD NAME OF COUNTRY should join this effort.** In doing so, we would show our commitment to women's rights and send a powerful message of zero tolerance for violence against women and girls. We can and must be part of the solution.

Please reach out today to Every Woman ([info@everywoman.org](mailto:info@everywoman.org)), the NGO coordinating the effort. I know that by joining the call for a new Optional Protocol to CEDAW, we can come together to end the most widespread human rights violation on earth.

Sincerely,

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<sup>6</sup> Rashida Manjoo, R., and Christina Beninger, C. (2024), "Closing the Protection Gap Through a Legally Binding CEDAW Optional Protocol on Violence against Women and Girls," International Human Rights Law Review (published online ahead of print 2024), page 5. <https://doi.org/10.1163/22131035-13020002>. See also, Statement by current and former Special Rapporteurs on violence against women, its causes and consequences, *Now is the time for an optional protocol to CEDAW on violence against women and girls*, 7 December, 2023, p 2, <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/women/sr/statements/stm-op-vaw-sr-vaw-7-12-23.pdf>.